

# **HOW DO CONTEMPORARY SOCIALIZATION TECHNIQUES AFFECT CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT?**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **How Do Contemporary Socialization Techniques Affect Childhood Development?**

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### **Literature Review**

David Riesman's ([1950] 2002) concept of other-directedness characterizes the majority of society today. He labeled other-directed the tendency of post 1950 American society to be more influenced by the media and social peers than ever before (Riesman [1950] 2002), p. 24-28). This results in a lack of individuality, change in social organization of family and academic units as well as vast differences in the socialization techniques of children. societies over time and dysfunction due to social factors. Riesman ([1950] 2002) argues that the shifts in society are dependent on demographic shifts in population growth, mobility, and technology. The transition from an inner-directed society prior to 1950 to an other-directed society after 1950 affected many aspects of American social life. Riesman ([1950] 2002) stresses that the roles of the family and social situation in socialization have changed due to media and peer group influence.

Similar to Riesman's theory, Durkheim ([1897] 1951) theorized that the shift towards modernity actually leads people into more isolation and at a loss of personal identity. He presents this aspect of modernity as the "crisis of the modern man" (Durkheim [1893] 2001), p. 202). According to Durkheim (1897), periods of economic, social, or political change result in a state of anomie or derangement. Anomic periods lead to dysfunction of society and the suffering of

individuals more susceptible to anomie. Durkheim hypothesized that, with this societal dysfunction, individuals and groups experience an increase in suicide rates.

Other studies have adopted a Durkheimian approach to analyzing suicide rates. In the American Journal of Public Health (2011) Drs. Feijun Luo, Curtis Florence, Myraim Quipse-Agnoli, Lijing Ouyang, and Alexander Crosby studied the impact of business cycles on United States suicide rates, from 1928-2007. They examined the associations of overall and age-specific suicide rates with business cycles in order to determine a correlation between business cycles and suicide rates for differing age groups. They concluded that business cycles may affect suicide rates, although different age groups may respond differently. The results of this study demonstrated that business cycles are not associated with increasing suicide rates among youth age groups, begging the question what accounts for increasing rates of youth suicide?

Erikson believed that childhood plays an important role in personality development. Beginning at birth, each stage builds upon the last and paves the way for later stages. Each stage presents a social crisis and the individual resolution is also influenced by the culture of society and family. The first stage presents the psychosocial conflict between trust versus mistrust. At this point in development, children learn whether or not they can trust the world around them based on the quality and consistency of their care. The development of trust is a crucial trait that contributes to a healthy personality and relationship to other societal factors. In a later stage, termed as identity vs role confusion the development of an Ego identity emerges. This conscious sense of self is dependent on the experiences and information acquire through social integration. Lack of development in this exploration stage results in a weak identity, troubles with fidelity, and no direction in life. I hypothesize that the characteristics of modernity make it increasingly harder to pass Erikson's stages of psychosocial development.

Synthesizing the works of Riesman, Durkheim and Erikson would help to explain characteristics of an other-directed society. Structure and interaction are crucial in child development, thus, if there is no interaction there is no cognitive development. According to Riesman, periods of demographic transition and opportunities for economic growth weakens the nuclear family, eventually dissolving tradition and inner-directed values. Riesman also denotes changes in parenting techniques in other-directed societies, which can modernly be demonstrated by daycare services becoming one of the “fastest growing industries” (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics). The reasons previously stated, among others, specifically but not limited to technological innovation, are responsible for the lack of structure when raising children and ultimately contributes to the anomic state and thus failure of Erikson’s stages among developing children and adolescents.

### **Thesis Statement**

Due to contemporary socialization techniques, the “post other-directed” era of society will be characterized by high rates of suicide, mental illness and deviance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

I propose to tackle my research question through examination and interpretation of existing data including but not limited to: dependence on technology, television and media portrayals, family unit, competition for academic and social achievements, trends among millennial data, and suicide rates. The distinctive aspect of my methodology is that I will be applying sociological as opposed to psychological and medical theories to existing data on the aforementioned issues. Examples of psychological approaches that I will attempt to supersede

with the sociological approach include (Hetherington and Cox, 1985), (Kraut et al., 1998), (Van Evra 2004) and (Wallerstein, 1991). I will be using David Riesman's ([1950] 2002) theory of socialization, as well as Emile Durkheim's ([1897] 1951) theory on suicide in tandem with the analysis of scholarly articles, data trends, literature and media coverage to demonstrate anomie in contemporary society that ultimately has an effect on psychosocial development.

## **Project Description**

Suicide rates have risen dramatically among children in the United States. Additionally, children are increasingly diagnosed with ADHD, depression and exhibit various indicators of stress. These problems are typically approached through the perspectives of psychologists, educators, and medical doctors, but not sociologists. As a result, society's role in these social problems among children has been neglected. My study will apply the sociological theory of David Riesman as set forth in his widely acclaimed analysis of American culture, *The Lonely Crowd* ([1950] 2002). I will be analyzing archival data on suicide, depression and mental illness among children and compare this data with various time periods in American history that Riesman sociologically analyzed. I will relate this data to dramatic social changes in American history since 1950 pertaining to the influence of media as well as social media, the role of parents and grandparents in raising children, the impact of the Internet and other social networking sites on socialization and personality development. The key feature of my study will be an application of Riesman's well-known theory to new data that he could not have foreseen at the time he published his book. The importance of this approach is that it fills in the role of society in social problems in an otherwise reductionist approach taken by psychologists and non-sociologists.

## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my cousin Cullen Gream, whose passing ignited a passion within me and a yearning to better understand youth suicide. My hope is that as a result of this research, others can reach a better understanding of the sources and effects of this devastating social issue and provide more effective support for those suffering.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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A thank you also goes to Pew Research Center and Gallup poll for the quality and extensive data they report. I would also like to thank the Launch Undergraduate Research Program at Texas A&M University who provided me with this opportunity and helped make it a successful learning experience.

Finally, I would like to thank my dear friend Katie Carter, whose love and support pushed me to pursue something that interested me. Without her encouragement, I would not have had the strength I needed to make a change in my academic experience, ultimately resulting in this Undergraduate Thesis.



## **KEY WORDS**

AAP      American Academy of Pediatrics

## INTRODUCTION

David Riesman's ([1950] 2002) concept of other-directedness characterizes the majority of society today. He labeled other-directed the tendency of post 1950 American society to be more influenced by the media and social peers than ever before (Riesman [1950] 2002), p. 24-28). This results in a lack of individuality, change in social organization of family and academic units as well as vast differences in the socialization techniques of children. While various research on socialization exists, the majority tends to be psychological or medical research that neglects the role of society. There is also a lack of research correlating socialization techniques in the present with social rates such as suicide, mental illness, conformity and deviance among individuals in society today, compared with earlier periods of time, especially prior to 1950. However, previous research by Riesman ([1950] 2002) and Durkheim ([1897] 1951) explores the evolution of societies over time and dysfunction due to social factors. Riesman ([1950] 2002) argues that the shifts in society are dependent on demographic shifts in population growth, mobility, and technology that result in the dissolution of tradition and inner-directed values.

The transition from an inner-directed society prior to 1950 to an other-directed society after 1950 affected many aspects of American social life. Riesman ([1950] 2002) stresses that the roles of the family and social situation in socialization have changed due to media and peer group influence. Therefore, with the changing socialization, America tuned into a country of anxiety-ridden other-directed social types, in which children exhibit suicidal and other dysfunctional symptoms incomparable to any other previous time in history. Similar to Riesman's theory, Durkheim ([1897] 1951) theorized that the shift towards modernity actually leads people into more isolation and at a loss of personal identity. He presents this aspect of

modernity as the “crisis of the modern man” (Durkheim [1893] 2001), p. 202). Applying Durkheimian sociology, I will be using suicide rates as a social index, in order to diagnose society today as anomic.

I will be testing the hypothesis that contemporary socialization processes have led to an increase in technology and media dependence, leading to the replacement of parental authority as well as traditional and inner-directed values. The results of the deregulation of will and “inextinguishable choice” have been a dramatic rise in rates of suicide, mental illness, conformity, and lack of commitment and personal drive among children and adolescents in American society today.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **THEORY REVIEW: KEY CONCEPTS**

Culture and societal shifts are generally a slow moving, multifaceted social process that affect the individual and society. While there are many factors that affect social transitions such as the political, economic, and historical relations of the times, I focus on technology as the main accelerant to an other-directed modernity in order to analyze the effects of stark technological innovation on contemporary socialization.

I employ David Riesman's theory of demographic transition in order to analyze and compare the socialization techniques of modernity and social character over time. To formulate this theory Riesman studied the "possible relationships between population growth of society and the historical sequence of character types" to determine "the patterned uniformities of learned response that distinguish men of different regions, eras, and groups" these actions and reactions of individuals that are dependent of social historical stage are what Riesman defined as social character. These distinctions in social character throughout time enact a categorization between historical time periods associated with a certain social character type. I will go into further depth by incorporating theories of Emile Durkheim and Erik Erikson to demonstrate the tribulations plaguing the modern social type and highlight the effects of the patterned uniformities of modern socialization.

For the remainder of this section, I introduce and explain several theories derived by prominent sociologists and social psychologists that when applied to the conception of social evolution reveal the effects of the fragile relationship between the individual and the social. In

later sections I apply and extrapolate these social theories to social phenomenon in order to explain the empirical data distinctive of the new millennium.

### **David Riesman Demographic Transition and Other-Directedness**

David Riesman was an educator, prominent sociologist, and a best-selling author who sold over 1.4 million copies of his study of the changing American social character, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950). The title of the book, “Lonely Crowd” is used as a descriptive metaphor, in order to highlight the mass feelings of alienation that plague an individual in a modern urban society. His intellectual career began at Harvard University and his sociological thinking was influenced by Eric Fromm, Sigmund Freud, and Thorstein Veblen. His conceptions in sociology denotes a demographic transition theory that reflects the values and interpretations of changing human character over time, resulting in three main character types which Riesman coined as tradition directed, inner directed and other directed.

According to Riesman’s theory, societies untouched by industrialization that are characterized by high growth potential produce adjusted, and conformed individuals whose personal values reflect the generational passed down traditions of the elders in their village, clan, caste, etc. This unquestionable obedience to tradition denotes the earliest social type- tradition-directed. Riesman argues that the shifts in society are dependent on demographic shifts in population growth, mobility, and technology ([1950] 2002). So, with transitional social forces such as accumulation of capital, industrialization, imperialism, technological shifts, and constant expansion the values of the individual in society changed, bringing us to Riesman’s second character type- the inner-directed.

Riesman denotes the first cultural shift as birth and death ratio began to change with innovation like modern medicine and hygiene practices. Specifically, in the inner-directed era birth rates remain high while death rates drop dramatically. An inner-directed individual holds personal values subjective to those of his immediate family as the household unit saw a cultural shift in tandem with the historical-environmental development of society. The household unit moved from it takes a village to raise a child to solely parental introjection of values. The internalization of these strong and unchanging values pushed the individual towards the path of wealth, power and success. Leaving the inner-directed generation with a yearning for achievement and a fear of wasting time.

Incipient population decline as well as a highly bureaucratic and metropolitan America signifies the shift to a modern character type, the other-directed. An other-directed society sees a dense population but doesn't see much growth as death rates remain low while birth rates are also low. Riesman's concept of other-directedness exemplifies the majority of society today. He labeled other-directed the tendency of post 1950 American society to be more influenced by media and peers than ever before. This innate need to conform to the popular norm results in a lack of individuality, change in the social organization of the family and academic units as well as a shift of importance to the opinion and approval of the peer group.

These cultural changes affect contemporary socialization practices in a variety of ways. The family unit is dissolved, not only are there less and less family dinners, there is a lack of interaction like singing, reading, and playing with children, and as a result, there is less cognitive development. Riesman also stated that there is a shift of responsibility from parents to teachers. This shift to classroom socialization leaves the children to become subjected to a "jury of ones peers," constantly comparing and judging others and in turn being judged themselves. This

leaves children with a need of approval from others, rather than for oneself. On a deeper level this makes the other-directed person more concerned with the aura, the appearance of achievement, rather than actually achieving.

While preceding American character types were guided by feelings of shame and guilt, the other-directed person is constantly riddled with feelings of anxiety. These feelings occur in part due to them getting lost in the Milky Way galaxy of choices. The Milky Way galaxy of choices is a term coined by Riesman. Rather than being guided by an internal gyroscope in pursuit of an individual career, the modern man is so consumed with the need for the approval and respect of others that they constantly look to the choices and decisions of others in order to make a personal decision. Getting stuck among inextinguishable choice prevents the other-directed individual from making long term goals.

### **Erik Erikson Psychosocial Development**

Along with being a notable sociologist, Erik Erikson was also a developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst and was well- renowned for his theory of psychological development. His theory of development focused on the progression of one's self through the completion of eight life stages. For my research, I am focusing on the first stage, Trust versus Mistrust and the fifth stage, Identity versus Role Confusion in order to demonstrate how the external forces of the anomic other-directed society today affect adolescent development.

The first stage of psychosocial conflict of Erikson's theory of development begins at birth and extends until about eighteen months in an infant's life. According to Erikson this is a crucial phase in a person's life as these early displays of either trust or mistrust exert a lasting influence over that infant's interactions with others and society. While studies have shown that a trusting

personality stems in part from genetics as well as environment, adopting a distrustful personality is a learned character trait. Therefore, the type and level of care infants receive from their parents and other caregivers is critical during this period of development.

During this stage the major question asked and answered is “can I trust the people around me?” Obviously, communication with a baby is limited to interpreting their cries, in which they express to their caregiver that they have a need that must be met. If an infant is to learn trust, their various needs must be attended to accordingly in a consistent and timely manner. Comfort, safety, and nourishment are also important factors that are necessary to obtain and develop trust. On the other hand, inconsistent and unloving care towards a child leads to feelings of rejection, possibly contributing to the fruition of mistrust. These mistrustful attitudes can translate into their later life as uncertainty, lack of confidence, and anxieties about themselves, social institutions, and the society around them.

The fifth stage, Identity vs Role Confusion occurs during years 12-18 in an adolescent’s life. During this time period there is a lot of self-questioning as the individual begins exploring themselves and begins searching for their own identity within society. Teens increasingly begin to explore different roles, activities and behaviors, forming an Ego identity, dependent on the experiences and information acquired through social integration. This time period is crucial for identity development and establishing a conscience sense of self and direction in life. Failure in this stage leaves the individual with feelings of insecurities and confusion about the self and their future.



## **Emile Durkheim: An Anomic Society**

Emile Durkheim is known as the father of sociology because he employed sociological thinking in attempt to explain the social problems of his time, establishing sociology as an academic discipline. He wrote several books concerning societal assimilation and unity in a contemporary society, where traditional culture is no longer assumed. In his classic work, *Suicide*, Durkheim analyzed empirical data to explain social phenomenon, paving the way for future sociological research.

Durkheim established the social and the individual as subjective of one another. Therefore, an individual's psychological identity develops as society shifts towards modernity. So, in turn changes in social reality eventually result in a new character type of people. He theorized that this social evolution actually leads people into more isolation and a confused sense of individualism. This "crisis of the modern man" is a result of periods of unregulated economic, social, political, and technological change that lead to anomie.

Durkheim defined anomie as derangement, which is the lack of regulation of egoistic will and desire. He used anomie as a tool to describe a condition of society that affects individuals of that time. Anomic periods cause societal dysfunction, and since the relationship between the individual and society are mutually influenced, society affects individual well-being. Durkheim employed this logic in his study of suicide, in which he used suicide rates as a social index, analyzing the fluctuations and trends in order to determine the state of society. He concluded that in a society plagued by anomie, an increase in suicide rates can be expected.

In modernity, society doesn't restrain the will and desires of the modern man. Durkheim stated that "unlimited desires are insatiable by definition and insatiability is rightly considered a sign of morbidity. Being unlimited they constantly surpass the means at their command, they

cannot be quenched,” (Durkheim [1897] 1951), p. 247) to denote that when will becomes unleashed and desires unlimited, this anomie translates to the individual as dissolution and anguish.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **TECHNOLOGY AS AN ACCELERANT TO AN OTHER-DIRECTED MODERNITY**

#### **Technology Innovation Accelerating Shift to Modernity**

Throughout social evolution, demographic transitions shifting away from traditional culture took hundreds of years. However, the shift from the inner-directed era to modernity happened so fast that some social force has to account for the acceleration towards other-directedness and the arising consequences.

The Internet was really first used in 1969 as a government tool and for a while after was solely a productivity tool. It wasn't until the 1990s when the Internet began to revolutionize human network communication. Initially, not everyone could afford a desktop computer and Internet service fees but as companies began to grasp the possibilities of digital innovation, competition to corner the market arose. It was this competition to exploit the Internet powered technological innovation. America Online, Inc (AOL) made the Internet an affordable subscription service that allowed the average American access. With an easier and more affordable approach, the number of users grew, and the first chat rooms came about. Company competition didn't stop there, there was also competing browser algorithms and softwares, such as Yahoo, Microsoft, and Google.

When the new millennium arrived, came with it a technological tidal wave. Apple pushed its way to the forefront of the technology revolution by producing innovative user-friendly products like personal computers and iPod. With advertising, Apple retail stores, legal online music download, and advanced phones the notion of living a digital life took hold on of many

levels of society. By the mid 2000s online culture had completely reformed social communication and interaction with online dating sites and social media sites like Friendster, myspace and Facebook.



Figure 1. Apple Stocks- 39 Year Stock Price History. Source: Macrotrends

Sites like Myspace, Facebook, and later social media platforms such as Instagram, make content discoverable using an algorithm based on what your friends like and recommend as well as what you interact with. This was the beginning of a new society, one based on what other people like, do, and post. Over the years of socially engaging this way result in people being more focused on the aura of things rather than something of reality.

In 2006 Google bought YouTube, a video viewing site, for 1.65 billion dollars in stock (CNN, 2018). Prior to this acquisition, Youtubers used the site to simply post and stream videos

for personal enjoyment. However, after the purchase, successful Youtubers could now get paid for posting content and the notion of the “Influencer” arose. An Influencer is defined as a “person with the ability to influence potential buyers of a product or service by promoting or recommending items on social media” (Oxford University Press, 2019). The influencer is the marketing tactic of modernity, as the top three content marketing tactics are social media content at 83%, blogs at 80%, and email newsletters at 77% (Brandwatch, 2019). I would also say that the concept and popularity of the Influencer nurtured and developed the conformist attitudes of the other-directed. Influencers are not unique to Youtube, WordPress, a popular blogging site publishes 74.7 million blog posts are published every month (Brandwatch, 2019).

Innovation drove technology into human lives more and more as products became increasingly easier to access and operate. The iPhone was revolutionary in the sense that it incorporated the Internet, the iPod, and the phone all into one device. It was so widely popular that other companies such as Google got into the cell phone business, producing similar products further reducing the digital divide. New technology that was so simple to use gave people a sense of instant mastery that eventually led to more and more people harboring an I want it now attitude, resulting in a society dependent on instant gratification. Instant gratification is “the desire to experience pleasure or fulfillment without delay or deferment” (Neil Patel, 2014). Relating back to Durkheim, this accelerated technological innovation resulted in major disruptive change across many different industries unleashing a “malady of infiniteness.” It was such a stark social movement towards digital dependence that instant gratification was institutionalized into society, preventing any regulation possibilities.

The institutionalization of instant gratification can be seen in modernity as companies of convenience grew in popularity. Amazon’s stock prices began to grow at the beginning of the

new millennium and accelerated quickly as technology became a prominent business tactic and instant gratification became a permanent character trait of the era. During the 2000s many companies began to base their business model off of this fast and convenient lifestyle of the consumer, when buying online and picking up in store, 80% of consumers said they expected to be able to pick up their item in under ten minutes (Saleh, 2017). Over the years we've seen grocery stores and restaurants implementing a curbside delivery system, Amazon developed "Amazon prime" which promises delivery in two days, and more recently Amazon is working on prime air, which promises a delivery of anything five pounds or less to be delivered in under 30 minutes by an unmanned drone.



Figure 2. Amazon Stocks- 22 Year Stock Price History. Source: Macrotrends

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS AND RELEVANCE

#### **Analysis**

Keeping in mind the characteristics of modernity listed above, I can apply the theories previously discussed in order to broadly illustrate the theoretical claims made by Riesman, Durkheim, and Erikson far before the advancement to modernity.

#### *Indications of an Other-Directed Modernity*

According to the figure three below, you can see the dramatic shift in Americans attitudes on what the ideal family looks like. Family was a valued necessity in tradition-directed society because having many healthy children also meant having healthy workers that could adapt to and learn the family trade, in turn making money and eventually honoring the family. The 1960s-70s is where the repercussions of the shift to an Inner-Directed society can be seen. During this time, history shifted away from tradition and as a result, American ideals changed. Birth control pills were invented and more widely accepted, and more and more Inner-Directed women began to stray from the traditional household status quo and began participating the workforce.

### Half of Americans Say Two Children is the Ideal

*What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?*

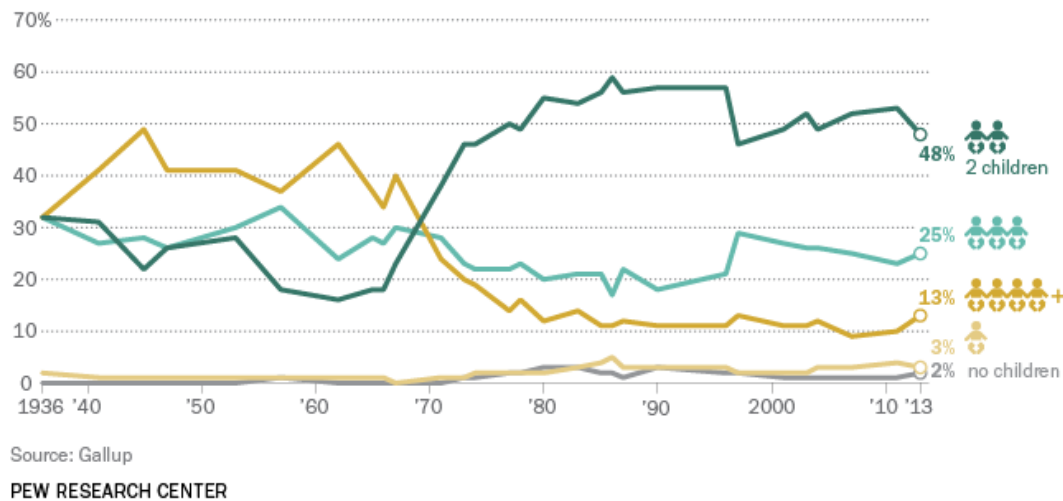


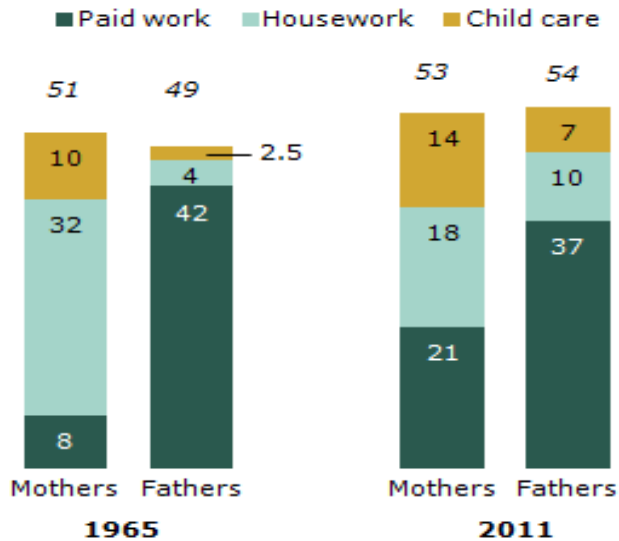
Figure 3. Ideal Family Unit Size, 1936-2014.

The share of mothers in the labor force with young children rose 24% from 1975-2012 (Pew research, 2015). Figure four denotes this shift in the role and the work of women over time (Pew Research, 2011). This data signifies the erosion of traditional parenting roles. Modern day mothers have increased the time they spend doing paid work and decreasing the time spent doing household work. As a result of this demographic shift Americans not only want less children but are in fact having smaller families. As shown above in figure three, around 1976, 36% of women had birthed four plus children and shown in 2014, only 12% of women had four or more children.



## Moms and Dads, 1965-2011: Roles Converge, but Gaps Remain

*Average number of hours per week spent on ...*



Note: Based on adults ages 18-64 with own child(ren) under age 18 living in the household. Total figures (at the top of each bar) may not add to component parts due to rounding.

Source: 1965 data from Table 5A.1-2 in Bianchi, et al. (2006). 2011 data from Pew Research analysis of the American Time Use Survey.

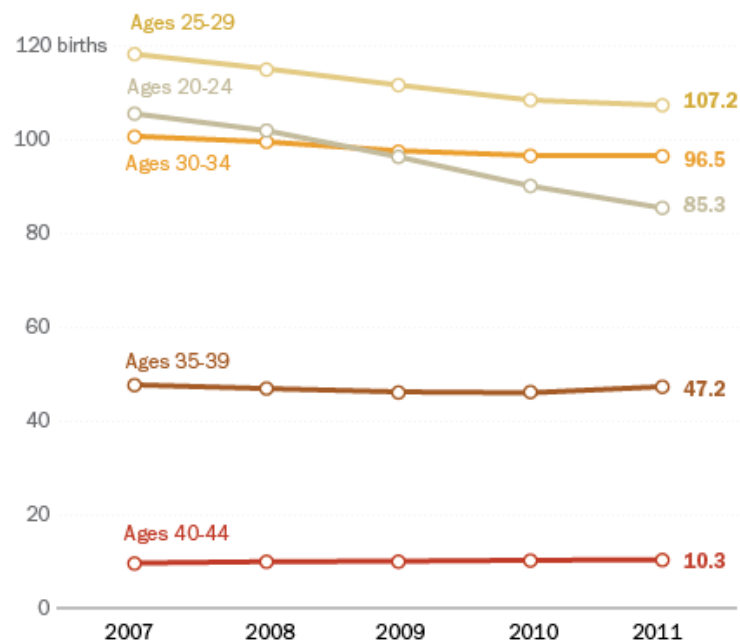
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Figure 4. Moms and Dads, 1965-2011: Roles Converge, but Gaps Remain.

As Riesman predicted an indicator of an Other-Directed society is low birth rates. Sharp declines in birth rates can be seen during times of recessions, however birth rates have been on a steady decline since the 1950s and reached a record low in 2011. However, people are still having children, but if not the millennial, who is it? Comparing birth rates by the age of the mother denotes an interesting trend. Women are now waiting longer to have children. Birth rates continually decline for women in their 20s, but for women in their 40s, birth rates have risen (Pew Research, 2013).

### Birth Rates by Age of Mother, 2007-2011

Number of births per 1,000 women in each age group



Source: National Vital Statistics Reports, Volume 62, No. 1. Rates are derived from population estimates based on the 2010 census.

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Figure 5. Birth Rates by Age of Mother, 2007-2011.

Not only are millennials waiting longer to have children, they are also foregoing or delaying marriage and staying at home with their parents longer. In 2018, 46% of millennials were married, a stark decline from that of previous inner-directed generations, in which 83% were married by that same age group (Pew Research, 2019). The inability to commit to anything—a person, a place, a career, and even a lifestyle is a character trait of the other-directed person. We will discuss the other-directed individual’s inability to commit in later sections, but for now let’s examine some data trends that result in lower birth rates for young people.

The millennial is more likely than any preceding generation to live at home with their parents or even stay at home longer. Educational attainment has an effect on these trends, showing that even with a bachelor’s degree the number of millennials living at home is nearly

double that of any preceding generation (Pew Research, 2019). On the other hand, millennials who never attended college are twice as likely to live at home. This educational and career and income attainment gap was rather narrow for preceding generations, demonstrating that going to college isn't really enough anymore. The cost of having children has only risen over the years, steering people away from starting families.

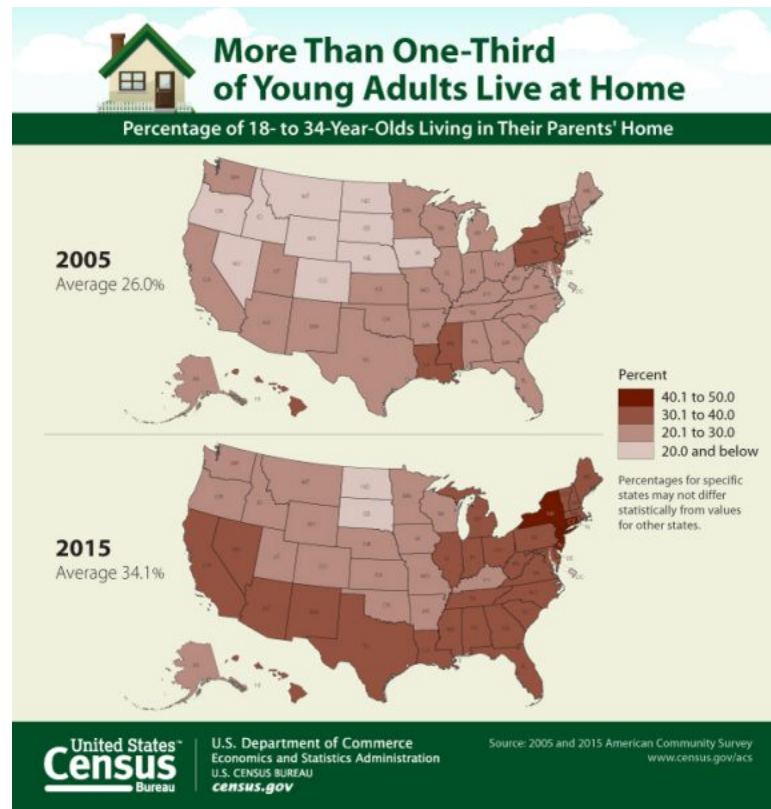


Figure 6. Percentage of 18- to 34-Year-Olds Living in Their Parent's Home.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is an association that strives to obtain optimal physical, mental and social health for children from infancy to young adulthood. By addressing childhood health needs, they provide insight and advice to parents and guardians of children. The organization recognizes that in modern day children grow up immersed in media, so they make child care recommendations according to the positive and negative effects on

childhood development in the digital age. Unfortunately, only one in five parents are aware of the AAP's recommendations of raising a child in the media age (Common Sense, 2017).

In order to develop important literary and language skills throughout a healthy childhood development, AAP recommends that children are read to beginning in infancy. Interaction with children is vital to healthy development and the lack of parent to child singing, reading, and playing has negative cognitive growth effects. It is also recommended that kids don't sleep with electronic devices in their bedrooms and to refrain from using screen media an hour before bed (AAP, 2009). Until recently it was AAP's recommendation that children under the age of two avoid screen media, but in an increasingly media age, that particular recommendation was amended to apply to children under the age of 18 months. Despite recommendations from AAP there is still negative uses of electronics and screen media among young children.

The mobile media, electronic, and technology revolution has taken over the lives of children and adults alike in America. As of 2017, 98% of homes with children under the age of 8 have a mobile device. The trend towards at home mobile media devices such as computers, laptops, smartphones, televisions etc. has increased at incredible rates since early 2000s and is only projected to increase more. As shown in figure seven, only 3% of children had their own mobile device, but today 45% of children are operating their very own electronic device (Common Sense, 2017). Many American parents (42%) with children under age 8, report that the TV is on "always" or "most of the time." The ways and the amount of time that children are interacting with media has changed since times of no technology and again since the adoption of technology into American's daily lives.

Media in the Home, by Device, 2011-2017			
Among 0- to 8-year-olds, percent who live in homes with:	2011	2013	2017
<b>Child's own device</b>			
<i>Any mobile device</i>	3% <sup>a</sup>	12% <sup>b</sup>	45% <sup>c</sup>
• Tablet	*a	7% <sup>b</sup>	42% <sup>c</sup>
• Smartphone	*a	*a	4% <sup>b</sup>
• iPod Touch or similar	3% <sup>a</sup>	5% <sup>b</sup>	5% <sup>b</sup>
<i>Educational game player</i>	29% <sup>ab</sup>	26% <sup>a</sup>	33% <sup>b</sup>
<i>Handheld game player</i>	24% <sup>a</sup>	21% <sup>a</sup>	14% <sup>b</sup>

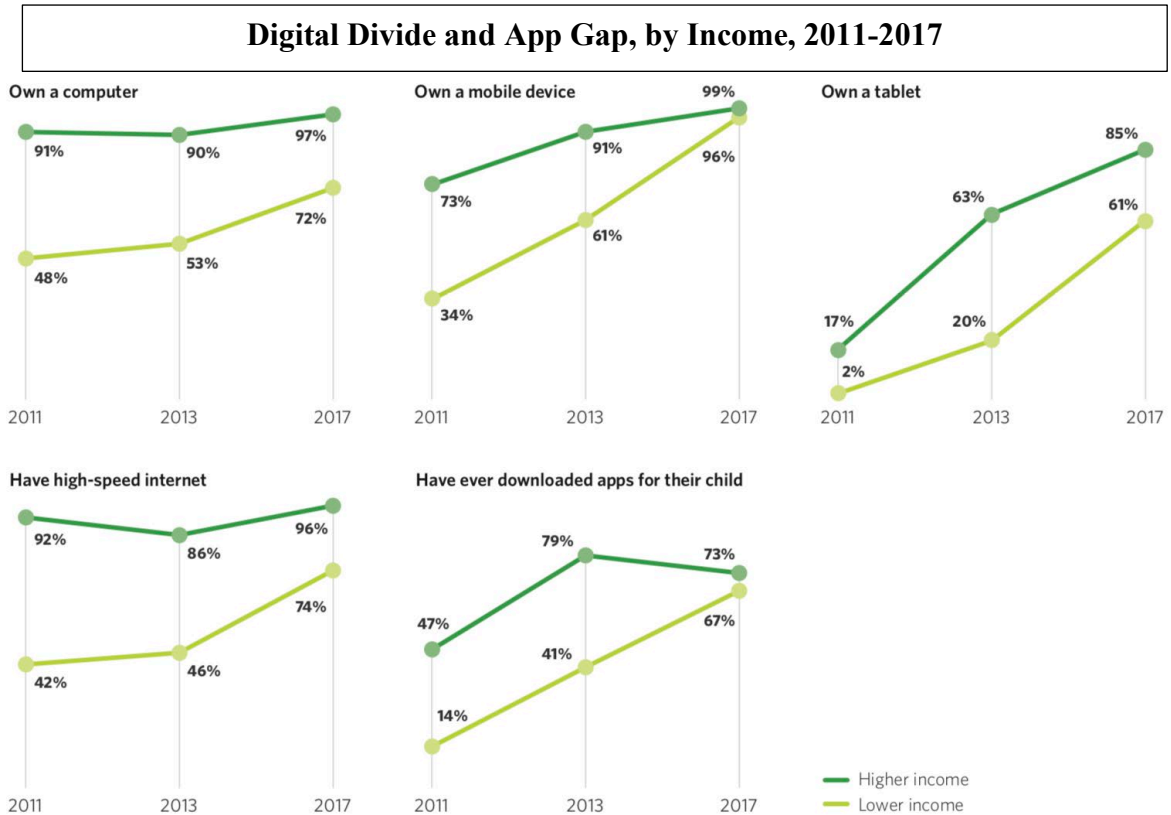
Figure 7. Media in the Home, by Device, 2011-2017. Source: The Common Sense Census.

Not too long ago the variations of watching TV was very limited. However, Screen media has become so ingrained in the lives of the modern individual that the media is a part of our culture and has been made easily accessible to anyone. Rather, than putting in a DVD or paying for a cable subscription you can stream any show or movie from media streaming site like Netflix or Hulu on any device- it doesn't even to have an actual television set. There is also an craze for online videos such as the ones uploaded on the video viewing platform YouTube. Access has become unlimited, and as a result so has consumption. As seen in figure eight, devices such as cable, DVR, and antennas have been replaced with mobile devices and smart technology that provide an easily accessible service. The majority of Americans with children under 8 have an Internet connected television, a subscription to a video service, a computer, and any type of mobile device (Common Sense, 2017).

Media in the Home, by Device, 2011-2017			
Among 0- to 8-year-olds, percent who live in homes with:	2011	2013	2017
<b>Television</b>			
• Television set	98% <sup>a</sup>	96% <sup>b</sup>	98% <sup>a</sup>
• DVD player	80% <sup>a</sup>	78% <sup>b</sup>	86% <sup>a</sup>
• Internet-connected TV	NA	30% <sup>a</sup>	75% <sup>b</sup>
• Subscription video service (e.g., Netflix, Hulu, or Amazon Prime Video)	NA	NA	72%
• Cable TV	68% <sup>ab</sup>	70% <sup>a</sup>	65% <sup>b</sup>
• DVR	35% <sup>a</sup>	28% <sup>b</sup>	44% <sup>c</sup>
• HD antenna	NA	NA	29%
• TV in child's bedroom	42% <sup>a</sup>	36% <sup>b</sup>	29% <sup>c</sup>
• TV on all/most of the time in home	39% <sup>a</sup>	36% <sup>a</sup>	42% <sup>b</sup>

Figure 8. Media in the Home, by Device, 2011-2017. Source: Common Sense Census.

Figure nine demonstrates that there is still an existing digital divide between low- and high-income families, but it is substantially smaller than previous years. While the gap in mobile ownership has basically disappeared with only a 3% difference among incomes, there is still a gap in who is owning a home computer. These figures highlight that no matter the income, there has been an upward trend in technology and mobile device ownership in the home, regardless of income indicating that owning a smartphone is a huge priority in modern day culture.



Note: Lower income is less than \$30,000 a year and higher income is more than \$75,000 a year. Middle income group is left off for clarity.

Figure 9. Digital Divide and App Gap, by Income, 2011-2017. Source: Common Sense Census.

As a result of these revolutionary changes in media landscape, Families are spending more time with technology than each other. Smart toys, virtual assistants and other Internet connected “toys” like items from Amazon Alexas to interactive barbie dolls are becoming increasingly prevalent in the home. As a result of all these technological advances children are interacting with themselves, others and technology different than ever before. While video watching, media screening, and web surfing has become an increasingly popular pastime in the home, electronic reading has not followed suit. As a consequence, only 43% of American children under the age of 2 are read to, as shown below in figure ten (Common Sense, 2017). The effects on development due to these changes in socialization is only beginning to be seen.

Daily Media Use, by Age, 2017			
Percent who do the following at least once per day:	Child's age		
	Under 2	2 to 4	5 to 8
Read/are read to	43% <sup>a</sup>	56% <sup>b</sup>	64% <sup>c</sup>
Watch any TV or video	35% <sup>a</sup>	67% <sup>b</sup>	67% <sup>b</sup>
• Watch TV	34% <sup>a</sup>	58% <sup>b</sup>	58% <sup>b</sup>
• Watch online videos	8% <sup>a</sup>	27% <sup>b</sup>	30% <sup>c</sup>
• Watch DVDs/videotapes	7%	12% <sup>ab</sup>	12% <sup>b</sup>
Use a mobile device	9% <sup>a</sup>	27% <sup>b</sup>	37% <sup>c</sup>
Use a computer	1% <sup>a</sup>	6% <sup>b</sup>	20% <sup>c</sup>
Play console video games	* <sup>a</sup>	3% <sup>b</sup>	10% <sup>c</sup>
Play handheld video games	1% <sup>a</sup>	3% <sup>a</sup>	7% <sup>b</sup>

\* Less than 1 percent but more than zero.

Note: Only those items with different superscripts differ significantly ( $p < .05$ ). Significance should be read across rows.

Figure 10. Daily Media Use, by Age, 2017. Source: Common Sense Census.

Mental illness such as anxiety and depression have always existed, but why in the other-directed era are mental health struggles so prominent and prevalent. The inner-directed individual felt pressure from their parents to succeed and internalized that pressure and strived to push themselves to succeed. Life for the inner-directed individual wasn't about being liked, rather the measure of your success was based on your career attainments. On the other hand, the other-directed individual feels pressure from society. As a conformist, the other-directed person yearns to be liked by all, they are aware of popularity ratings and weary of the trivial things that could boost the aura of real life. Pew research (2015) reports that 40% of teen social media users report feeling pressure to post content that makes them look good to others, and 39% of teens on



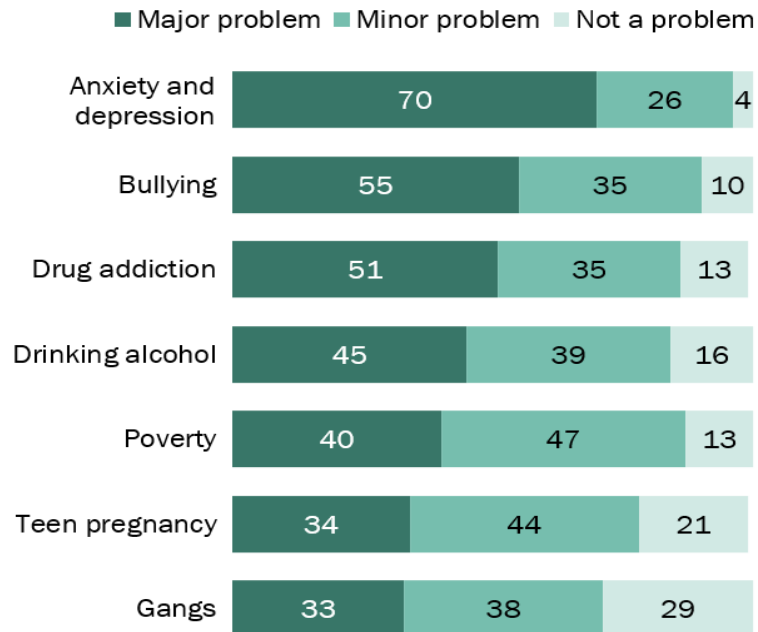
social media say they feel pressure to post content that will be popular and get lots of likes and comments. This highlights that the measure of success for the millennial is affirmation from the group- which in modern day society is nearly impossible to achieve.

Concern over anxiety and depression among their peers was the most reported problem in their community, with 7 out of 10 teens saying it was a major problem among their peers.

Modern day pressures that teens face was listed as pressure to achieve academic success 61%, to look good 29% and to socially fit in 28% (Pew Research, 2019). So how do these pressures lead to mental illness?

## Anxiety and depression top list of problems teens see among their peers

*% of teens saying each of the following is a \_\_\_\_ among people their age in the community where they live*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 conducted Sept. 17-Nov. 25, 2018.

"Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem Among Their Peers"

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Figure 11. Anxiety and Depression Top List of Problems Teens See Among Their Peers.

Achieving academic success is crucial for future successes like building a career, the modern individual has more competition for jobs post undergraduate graduation than ever before as there are nearly twice the amount of full-time college students today then there were in the 1990s (The Conversation, 2015). Figure twelve demonstrates the effects of a competitive job market as more people are graduating from university and receiving an undergraduate degree, denoting an approximate 16% downward shift in full time employment for degree holders. 32% of graduates in any field of study were unable to find full time employment after college. With

the inflation of credentials necessary to avoid unemployment, it seems like a degree is no longer enough. Now it is almost necessary to set oneself apart with some kind of certification, training, or a postgraduate degree.

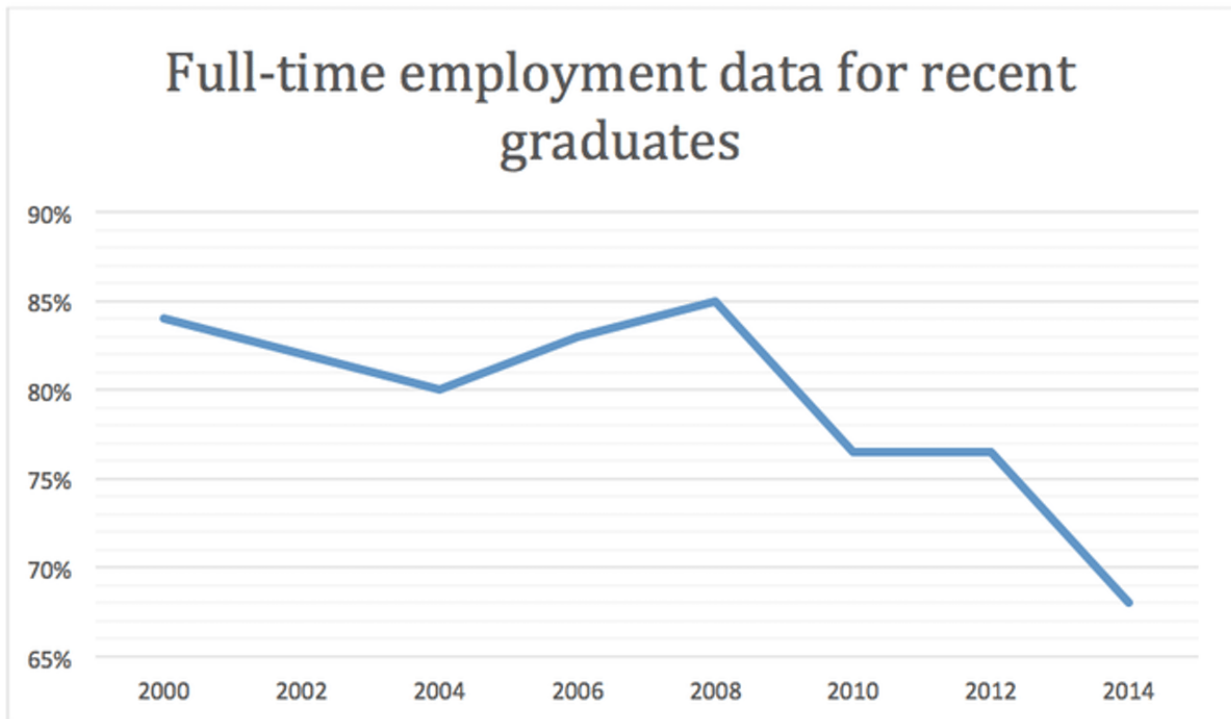


Figure 12. Full-time Employment Data for Recent Graduates. Source: The Conversation.

The last two pressures cited by teens today are a direct result of being other-directed. Due to the increased importance of the media and peer group influence, modern day teens are plagued with the need to fit in and portray the illusion of an idyllic, fun-filled, aesthetically pleasing life. We already know that basically everyone in this age group owns a smartphone and engages with social media apps. Figure thirteen breaks down social media usage, showing that the most used apps by this generation are the ones that involve status posting, life updates, a following, and a like and dislike button. At the other-directed person's fingertips, there are millions of pressures stemming from comparison and the need to conform just from using these apps. Seeing the

beautifully filtered images people post on social media of their accomplishments fills the other-directed user with regret of their own decisions, feeling like they pale in comparison. This makes the other-directed person envious of others achievements, as predicted by Riesman, and shows them what they should look like, who they should like, what to wear, how to act, and how to make decisions.

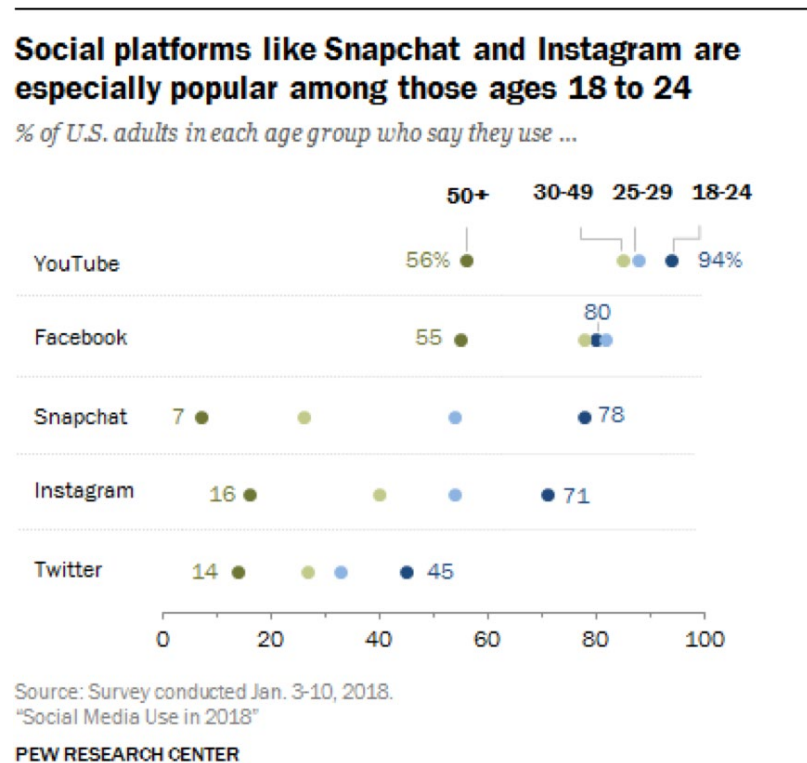


Figure 13. Social Platforms like Snapchat and Instagram are Especially Popular Among Those Ages 18-24.

### *Indications of Failing Erik Erikson's Life Stages*

Erikson stressed the importance of consistent, responsive, and nurturing care during this initial stage of development. Traditionally, it was the role of the mother and the grandmother to provide this care. However, the societal shift away from tradition altered the roles of the mother and the grandmother, and generally speaking, took them out of the home. More women began entering the workforce, and as labor force participation rates for mother have risen over the decades, so has the use of child care. U.S Labor Bureau of Statistics (2014) described daycare as one of the fastest growing industries, and various childcare programs are only projected to continue growing.

The type of childcare used by mothers has varied throughout the years. The shift to modernity altered the traditional roles of the mother, as women began to enter the workforce. With this increase of working mothers, the need for child care grew as well. U.S Labor Bureau of Statistics described daycare as one of the fastest growing industries. Looking at trends of center-based programs, it is apparent that in 1977 13% of children from birth to age four were put into daycare. That rate grew substantially until 1993 when the proportion of that age group in day care rose to 30%. The use of daycare from then until just before the new millennium saw a slight decrease but has since increased with the new decade to 26% in 2011 (Childcare, 2016).

These trends in childcare highlight the societal shift away from traditional family values. Although the increase in daycare usage may not be the sole reason for failing Erikson's first stage, it is important to note that keeping up with consistency is harder in contemporary socialization. When analyzing society today, it can be determined through various indicators that more often than not, this stage is not being successfully completed according to Erikson. Evaluating indicators such as trust in media, government, and other institutions, the failure of the

stage becomes apparent. As a result of failing the trust versus mistrust period, America has become a suspicious society, lacking a basic trust in societal factors.

Since the early and mid 1970s Gallup poll has been surveying and reporting American confidence in institutions. In general, American trust in institutions is decreasing, with the exception of the military, in which public trust has seen a 16% increase. Since the first poll in the mid 1970s, public trust in organized religion, the Supreme court, the presidency, Congress, public schools, newspapers, banks, medical system, televised news, and Internet news has decreased (Gallup, 2018). It is important to note that Figures 14-24 omit responses of “no opinion.”

As depicted in the figures below, results show that since the poll was first taken around 1973-1975, people reporting they had “very little trust” in newspapers increased by 24%, “very little trust” in the presidency increased by 26%, and “very little trust” in the medical system increased by 21%. Furthermore, people reporting they have a “great deal/quite a lot of trust” in institutions such as organized religion, the Supreme court, Congress, public schools, banks, televised news, and Internet news has decreased variably.

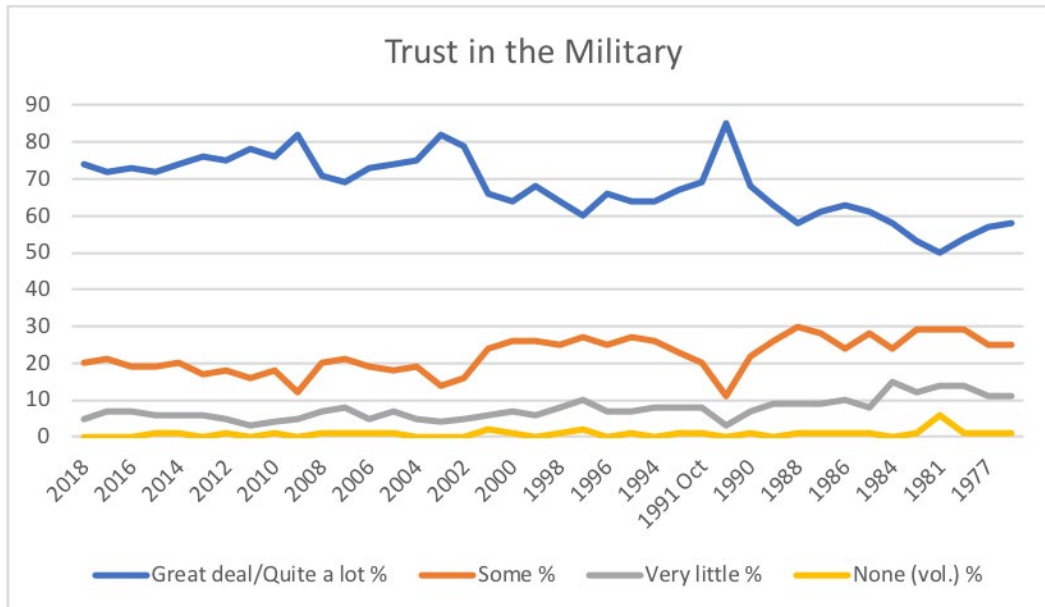


Figure 14. Trust in the Military, 1977-2018. Source: Gallup

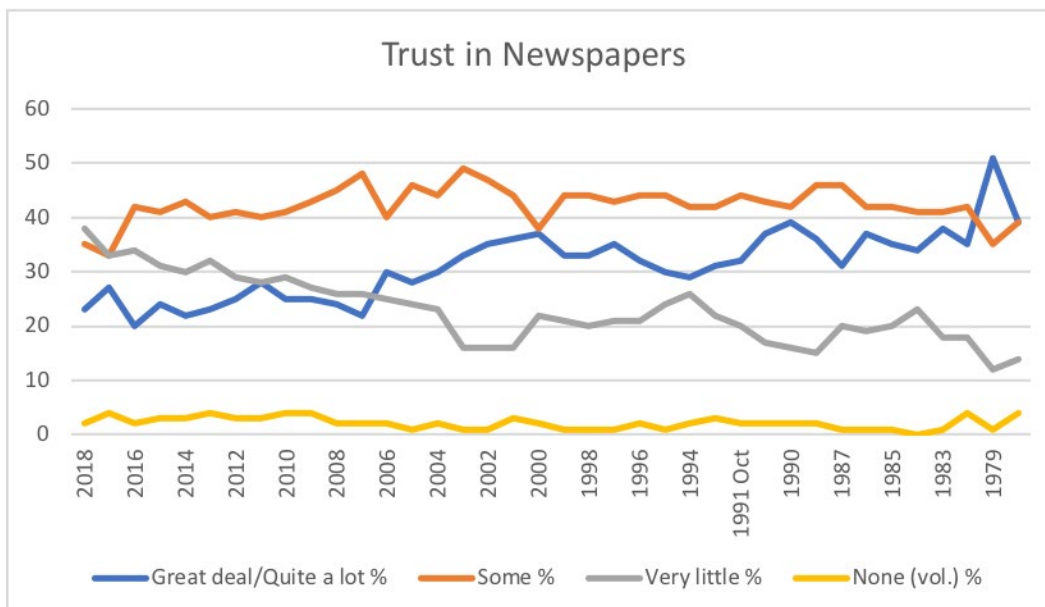


Figure 15. Trust in Newspapers, 1979-2018. Source: Gallup

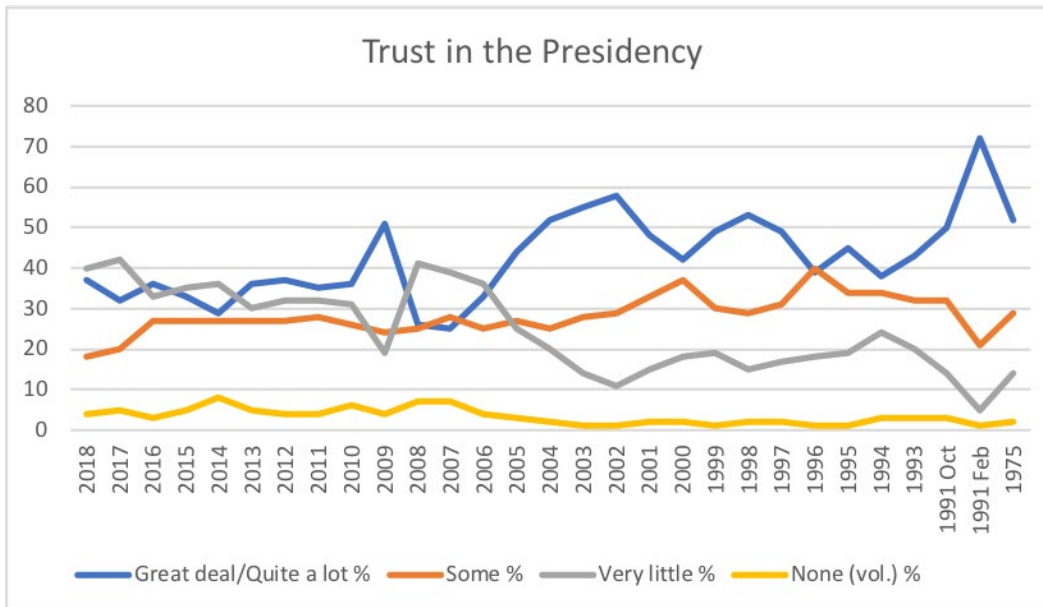


Figure 16. Trust in the Presidency, 1975-2018. Source: Gallup

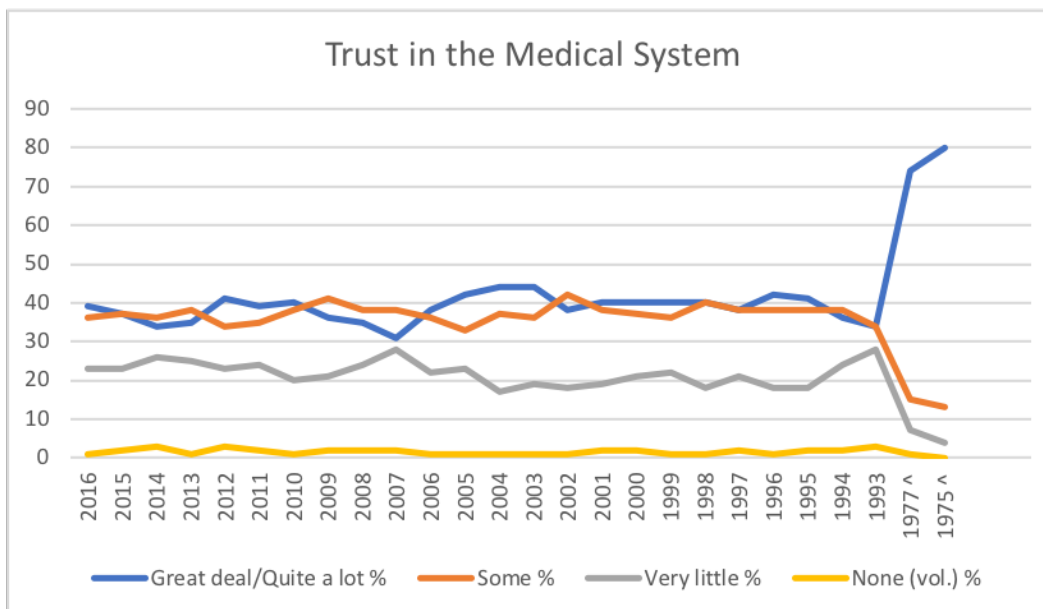


Figure 17. Trust in the Medical System, 1975-2016. Source: Gallup.

Reflected in the graphs below, since 1973 to 2018, trust in organized religion has decreased by 27%, trust in the Supreme court has decreased by 8%, trust in Congress has decreased by 31%, and trust in public schools has decreased by 29%. Since 1979-2018, trust in



banks decreased by 30%. Trust in televised news saw a decrease of 26% from 1993 to 2018 and trust of news on the Internet has decreased 5% since 1999.

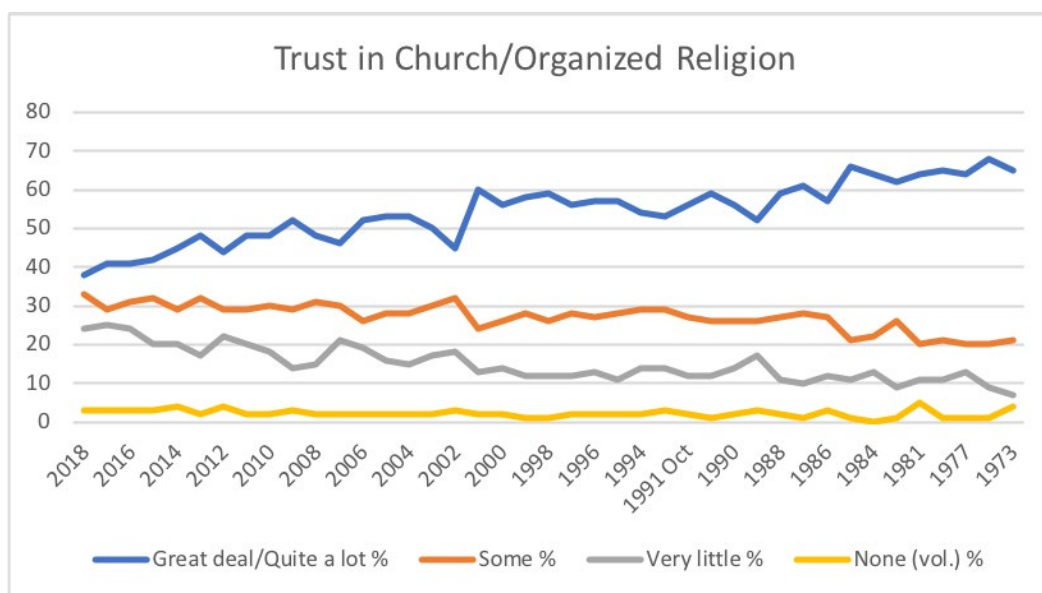


Figure 18. Trust in Church/Organized Religion, 1973-2018. Source Gallup.

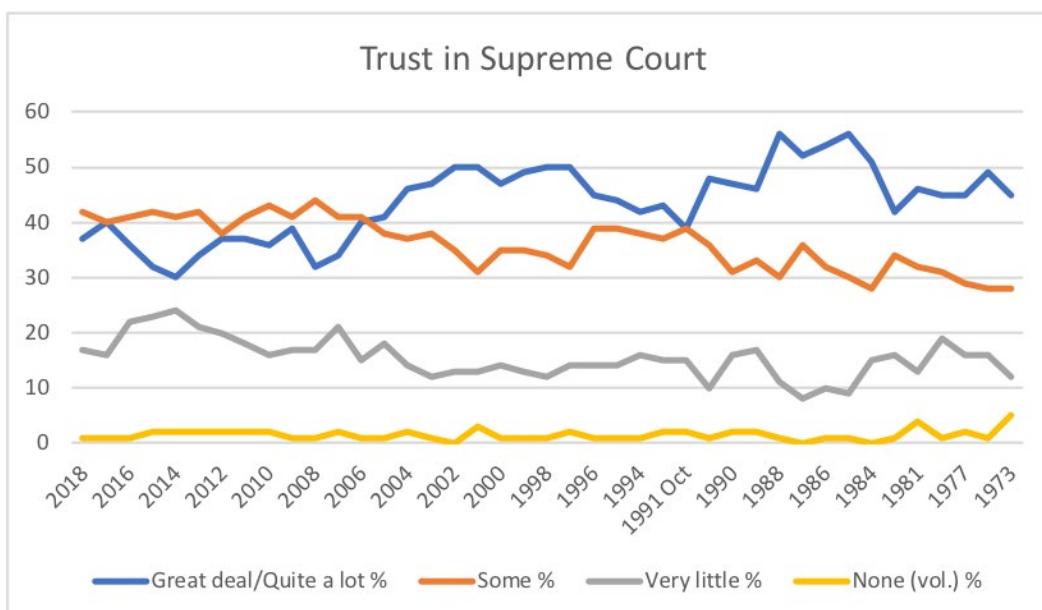


Figure 19. Trust in Supreme Court, 1973-2018. Source: Gallup.

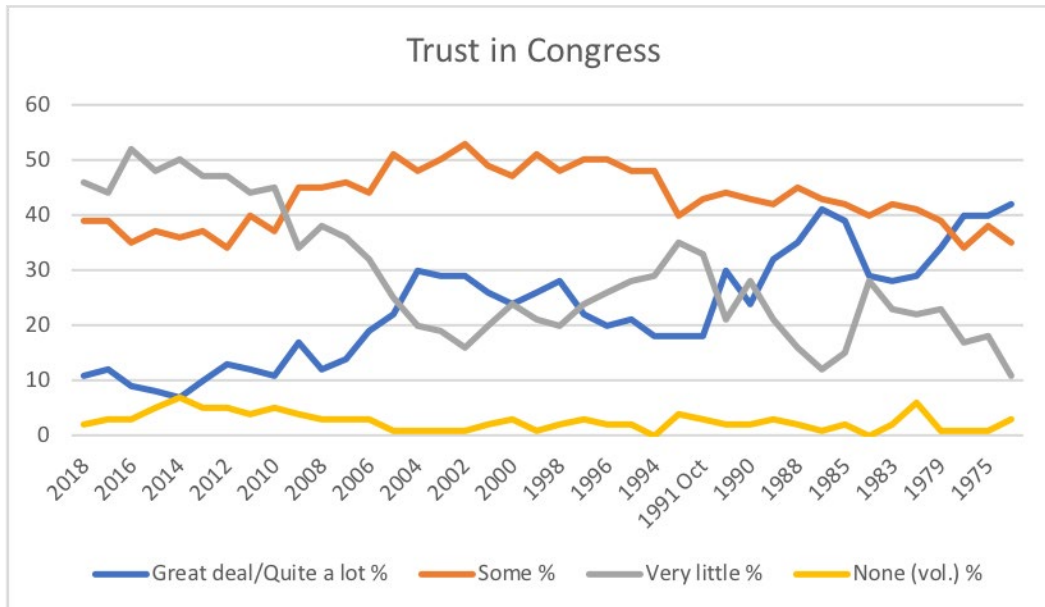


Figure 20. Trust in Congress, 1975-2018. Source: Gallup.

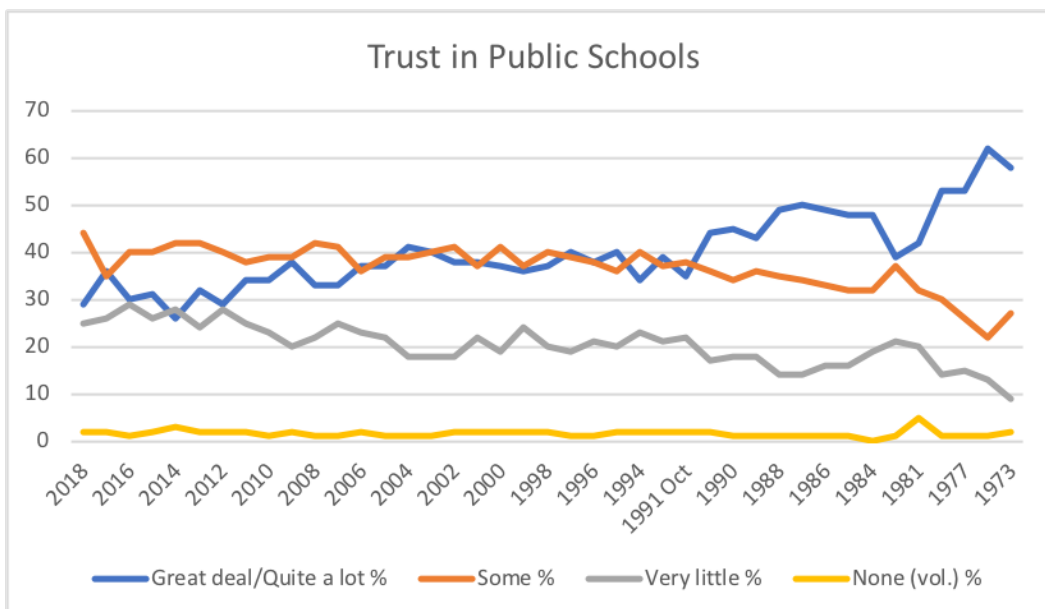


Figure 21. Trust in Public Schools, 1973-2018. Source: Gallup

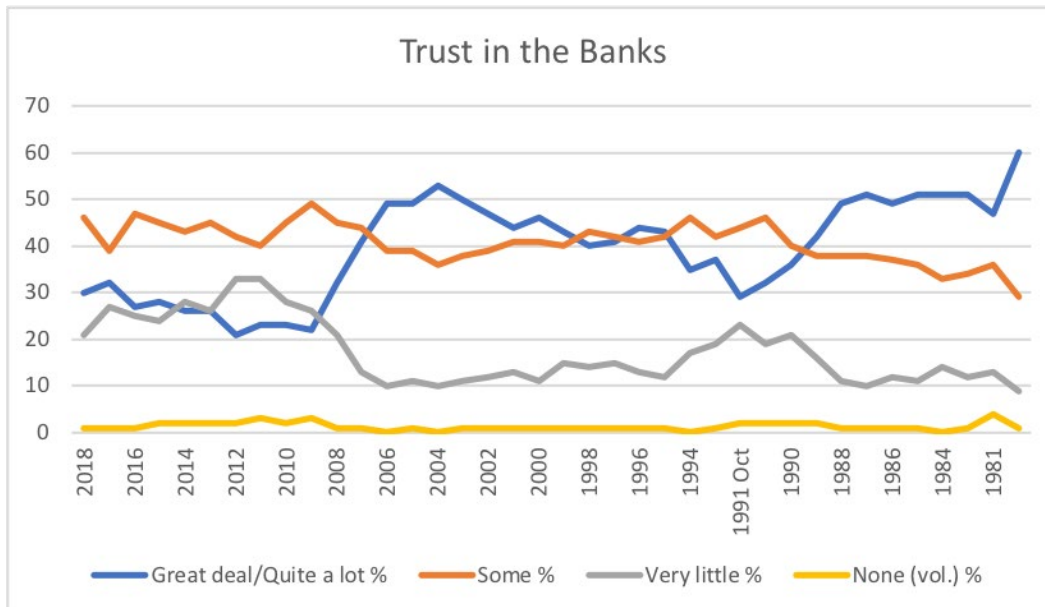


Figure 22. Trust in the Banks, 1981-2018. Source: Gallup.

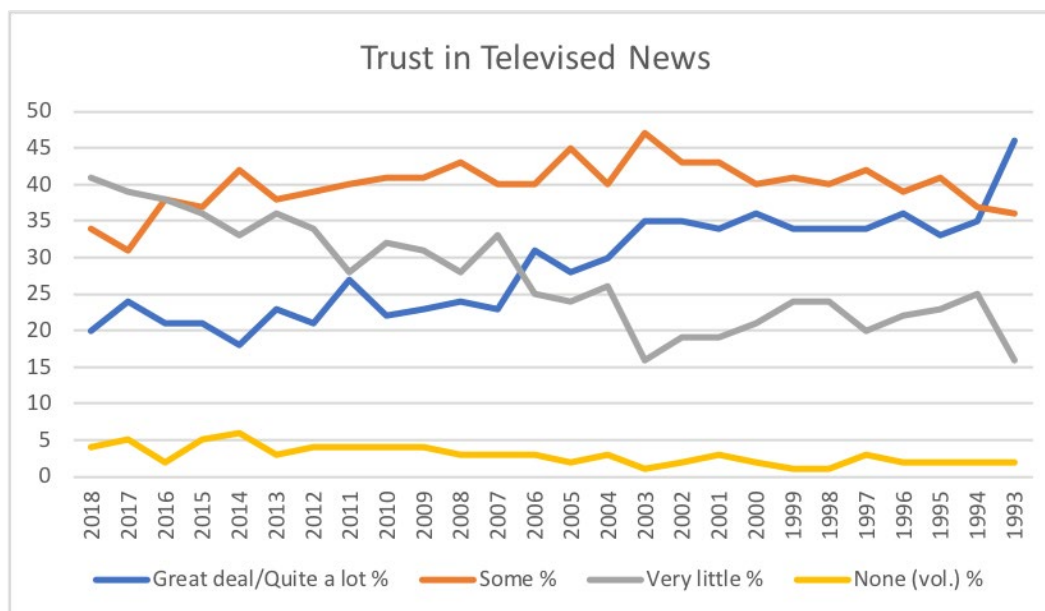


Figure 23. Trust in Televised News, 1993-2018. Source: Gallup.

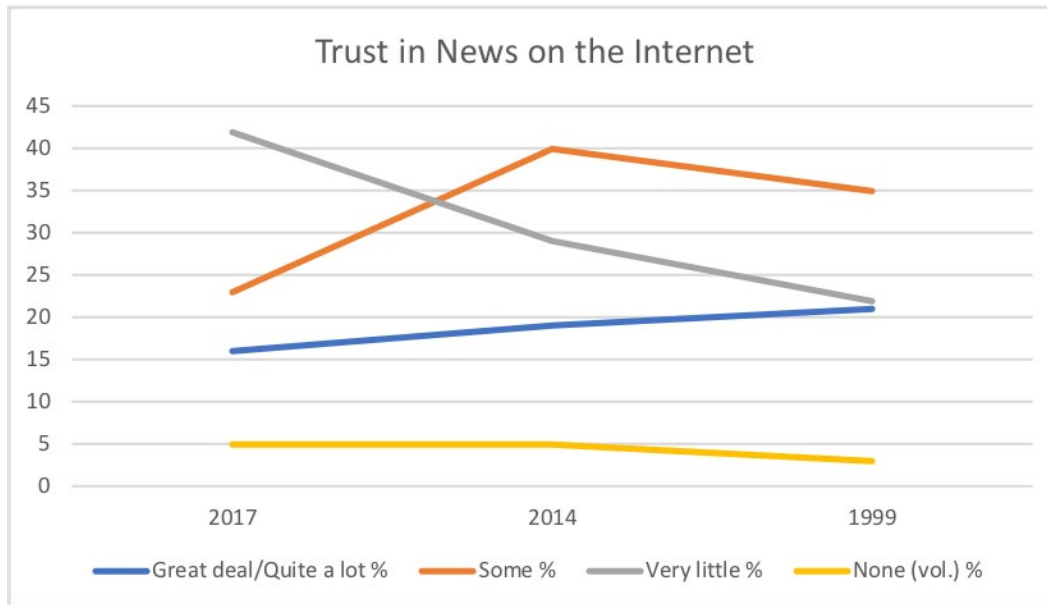


Figure 24. Trust in News on the Internet, 1999-2017. Source: Gallup.

While there is an overall trend in America of declining trust in institutions, there are several key events that can account for several periods of staunch distrust. The evictions, foreclosures, and prolonged unemployment seen as a result of the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 can account for some of the growing distrust in banks. Trust in aspects of the government fluctuates with change in leadership, economic struggles, war-time, and political scandals. Trust in the medical system saw its sharpest decline in trust from 1977-1993, at 40%, during the Reagan administration when healthcare became deregulated, and corporatized which ultimately de-professionalized physicians. There was such a stark decrease in trust during this time as healthcare costs skyrocketed and doctors became businessmen and hospitals became corporations.

Although the parents play a large role in the identity stage, in modernity, peers, friends, popular culture, screen culture and other social groups have an increasing effect. This makes searching for self and social affirmation during this stage increasingly difficult and leaves them in a state of role confusion, unable to comprehend fidelity. Fidelity can be described as the

ability to commit to others and personal decisions, which according to Riesman is already a challenge for the modern-day adolescent. The effects of role confusion can be seen in the employment and social sector of one's life, as the confused individual drifts from job to job or relationship to relationship. The individual can never be happy with themselves and their place in society.

First and foremost, the authority figure that the adolescent seeks affirmation from during this stage has shifted from the parents to the peer group. With technology of modern day, the peer group has also changed. It is no longer just friends or classmates. It's the entirety of the world around them that is plugged in. Interestingly enough, on average, American children receive their first cell phone at age 12 (CTIA Wireless Foundation, 2012.,) the same age they enter the identity stage of development. Therefore, during this stage the individual is looking towards countless people and countless trends to form their identity, rather than from within themselves. To demonstrate this shift in authority I've included data below on cell phone usage and social media.

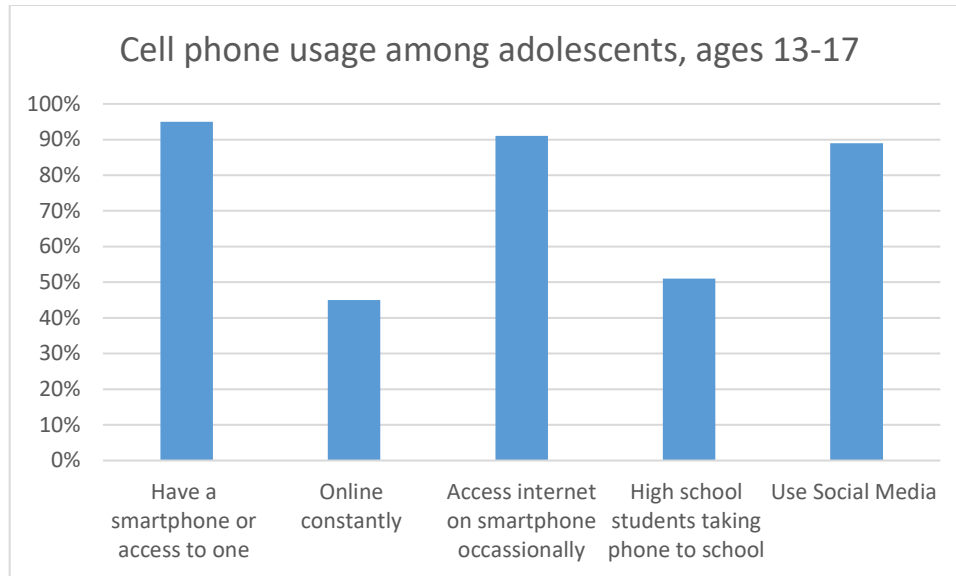


Figure 25. Cell phone usage among adolescents, ages 13-17. Source: Growing Wireless, *Kids Wireless Use Facts*.

The chart above shows that almost all teens have a smartphone or access to one and access the internet on their smartphone frequently (CTIA Wireless Foundation, 2012).

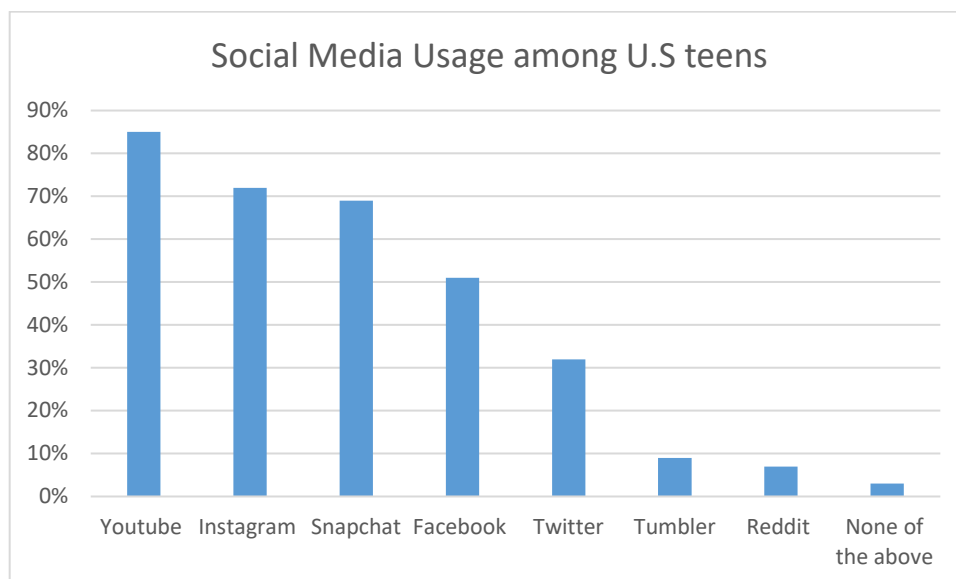


Figure 26. Types and Frequency of Social Media use among teens, ages 13-17. Source: Growing Wireless, *Kids Wireless Use Facts*.

The chart above breaks down teen social media usage, demonstrating that the most used apps are the ones that involves status posting, life updates, a following, and a like and dislike button (CTIA Wireless Foundation, 2012).

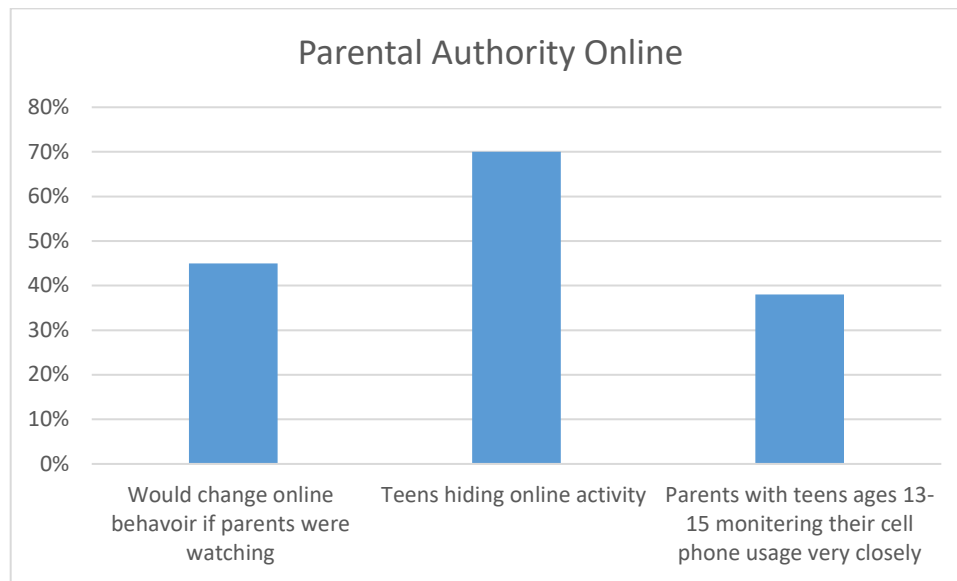


Figure 27. Parental Authority and Controls Online, for Parents with Teens, Ages 13-17. Source: Growing Wireless, *Kids Wireless Use Facts*.

The chart above demonstrates the level of online parental authority.

In tandem, all the above figures suggest the same thing, teens care more about their online presence and the online presence of others more so than their immediate environment. Although there has been a shift of importance from the real world to an online world, parental authority did not carry over. Rather than being under the supervision and subject to the critique and direction of one's parents or the real-life environment around them, adolescents in modernity are increasingly subjected to the thoughts, views, norms and critiques of millions of people in the online community. The social media apps most commonly used are those of which people have their own audience, as well as participate in the audience of others. Adolescents live to follow the popular others and please their following by conforming to popular culture that is constantly

reinforced by social media. Social media is so important in society today that it is now a measure of success- how many likes can you get? Who has the most followers? What are they doing? How are they living? Therefore, during this stage, rather than questioning their own life and propelling themselves forward, the modern-day adolescent gets held up asking the wrong questions. Leaving them full of envy and confusion, rather than fidelity.

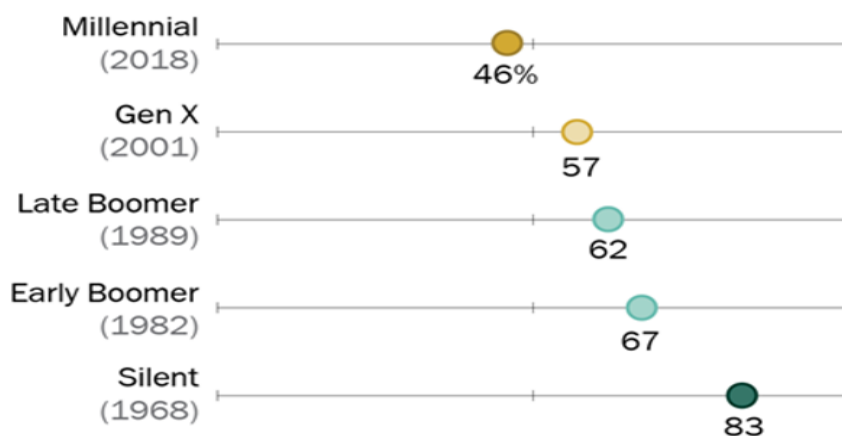
Analyzing society today keeping in mind the consequences of not successfully forming an identity during this stage, it can be determined that more often than not, modern day adolescents are not successfully completing this stage thus, not learning the virtue of fidelity. Looking at data and trends of modern-day America such as millennials not moving, living in poverty, renting homes and waiting to get married and have children demonstrates that young Americans are struggling to explore themselves and commit to anything.



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## Millennials less likely to be married than previous generations at same age

*% of 25- to 37-year-olds who are married*



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1968, 1982, 1989, 2001 and 2018 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplements (IPUMS).

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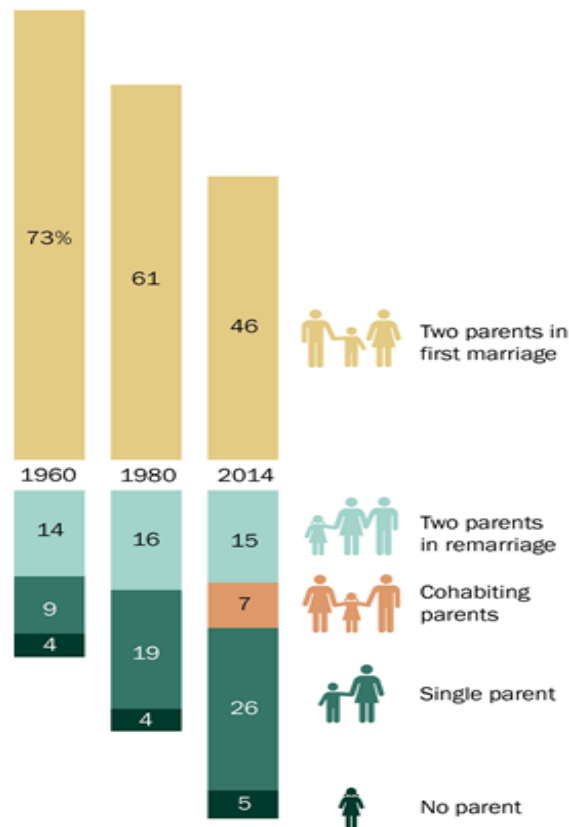
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Figure 28. Millennial Less Likely to be Married Than Previous Generations at Same Age.

A sure indicator of failure to complete the identity stage shows its head among data that demonstrates that increasingly Americans can't commit to anything. For example, Americans cannot commit to one person. According to a Pew research (2019) study, the rate of marriage is down 8% since 1990 due to the fact that Americans are staying single much longer: the median age of marriage for men is 30 years old and 28 years old for women, demonstrated in figure twenty-eight. On the other hand, remarriage has risen 10 % since 1960 and four-in-ten marriages involve a remarriage. Figure twenty-nine below depicts the breakdown of the nuclear family over time, denoting there is not a dominant family form in an other-directed America.

## For children, growing diversity in family living arrangements

% of children living with ...



Note: Based on children under 18. Data regarding cohabitation are not available for 1960 and 1980; in those years, children with cohabiting parents are included in "one parent." For 2014, the total share of children living with two married parents is 62% after rounding. Figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1960 and 1980 decennial census and 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS)

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Figure 29. For Children, Growing Diversity in Family Living Arrangements.

Young Americans struggle with career commitment. Named the most likely generation to switch jobs by Forbes, millennials report switching jobs at a rate three times higher than previous generations (Gallup, 2016). Failure during the Identity vs Role confusion stage can result in having no direction in life, which is reflected in real life statistics that state that 21% of millennials have reported switching jobs in the past. This rate is three times higher compared to

non-millennials (Gallup, 2016). Another result of failure during this stage would be having a weak identity. Low engagement in the workplace and a lack of passion to do great work was reported by 55% of millennials in the workforce, demonstrating a weak identity and lack of drive (Gallup, 2016).

If the conscious self does not acquire enough information and experiences during this exploration stage, the individual will lack a sense of self-direction and struggle with social integration and commitment.

### *Indications of an Anomic Modernity*

This section analyzes suicide rates in the United States over time in the context of anomic periods. Synthesizing empirical analysis with existing literature, I seek to explain that while there is a relationship between economic recession and an increase in suicide rates, that is not the sole culprit for the modern-day anomie, that results in the drastic increases in suicide seen in the new millennium.

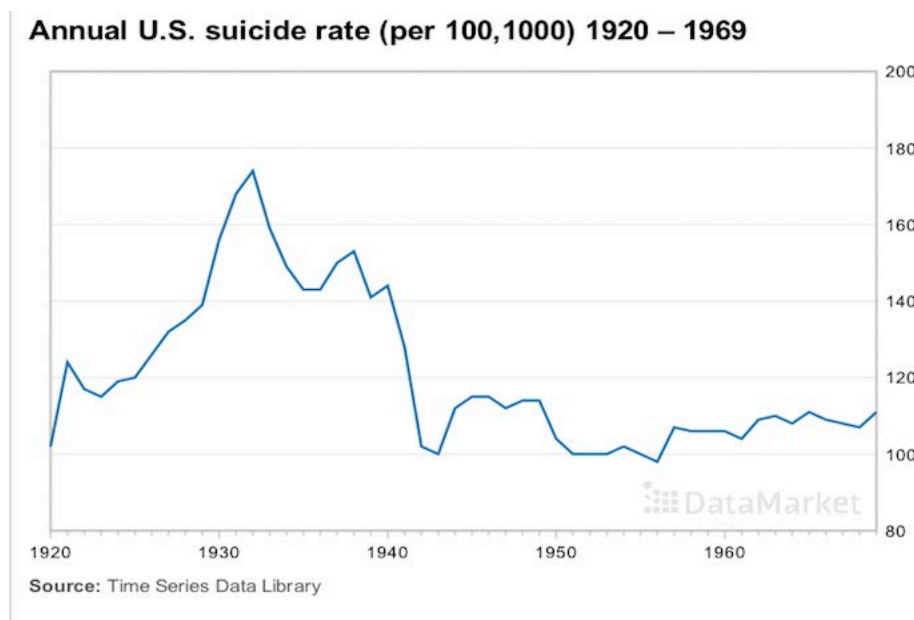


Figure 30. US Suicide Rates 1920-1969, per 100,000.

As shown in the figure thirty above, suicide rates spiked leading up to the stock market crash of 1929. Specifically, during the start of the Great Depression period in 1929 suicide rates were about 14 per 100,000 and increased to 16 per 100,000 in just one year. This increase continued until suicides spiked to an historic high in 1932 to about 17.5 per 100,000. But since declined relatively consistently with few fluctuations until 1999.

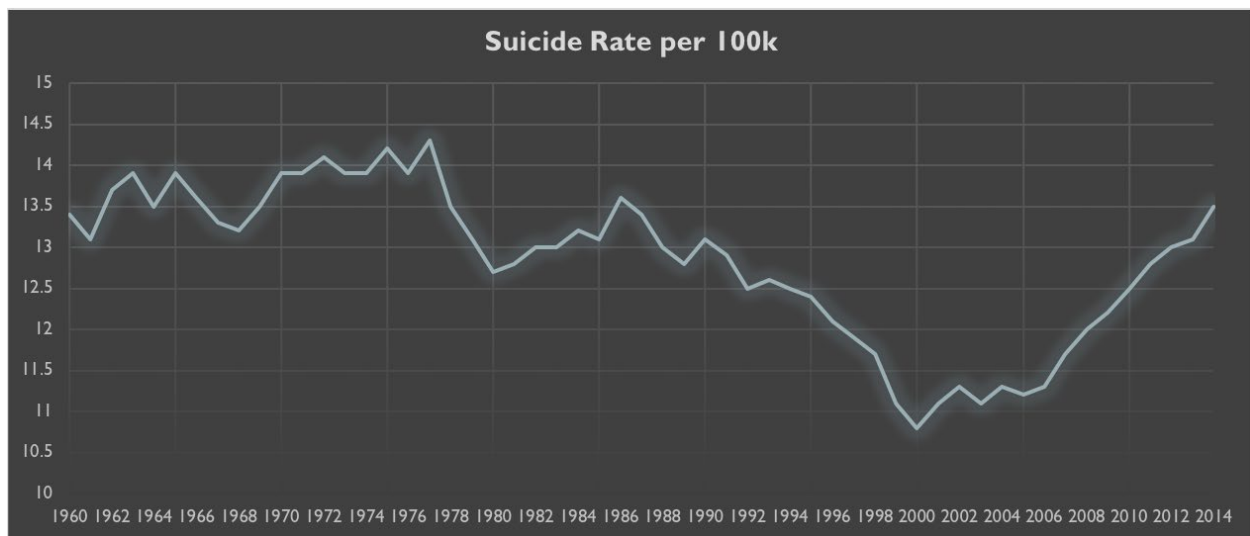


Figure 31. US Suicide Rates 1970-2014, per 100,000. Source: OECD.

The 1950s- 1990s was a relatively non-anomic period, as reflected in the figure thirty-one above as a consistent decline in suicides. You can see that at the turn of the new millennium the United States entered another such anomic period as seen leading up to and during the Great Depression. In 1999 the suicide rate per 100,000 was 11.1 but this rate grew steadily throughout the 2000s seeing a 24% increase into 2014 when the suicide rate rose to 13.4 per 100,000. The acceleration of this increase is greater after 2006, at a pace of about a 2% increase yearly (Time Series Data Library).

Although suicide rates during 1999-2014 increased for both genders of all ages 10-74 years, this data can be further dissected. A study completed by Sally Curtin, Maragaret Warner, and Holly Hedegaard titled *Increase in Suicide in the United States, 1999-2014* found that during this time period the age-adjusted female suicide rate saw a 45% increase while the rate of the same measure for males saw a 16% increase, ultimately narrowing the gender gap among suicides. More troubling, the suicide rates for young females tripled as this age group 10-14 years experienced the largest percent increase at 200%. Comparatively, female age groups 15-24, 25-44, and 65-74 years of age saw an increase ranging from 31% and 53%. On the other hand, males of the 10-14 years of age group increased by nearly 40%.

There are numerous studies that employ United States and cross-national data to explain suicide rates in a macro level context. In which analysis of the role that employment and financial circumstances as well as business cycles have on suicide rates is studied. In general, and also demonstrated in figures thirty and thirty-one, the overall suicide rate rises during recessions, and falls during expansions. However, this varies for certain age groups.

Nonparametric tests completed in a study done by Drs. Feijun Luo, Curtis Florence, Myraim Quipse-Agnoli, Lijing Ouyang, and Alexander Crosby (2011) indicated a correlation between economic recession and expansion with the rise and fall of suicide rates for age groups 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64 years (2011). This correlation reflects and supports Durkheim's arguments that social regulation and integration are related to suicide. However, the same association was not found in age groups 10-14 and 15-24 years, and thus cannot explain the rise in suicide rates for these age groups.

The same study included previous research examining the relationship between economic downturns and unemployment which also demonstrated mixed results. They found that...

“Although suicides increased rapidly in the United States during the Great Depression and in Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong after the outbreak of the Southeast Asian economic crisis, the suicide rate declined during times of economic crisis in Finland, Sweden, and Geneva, Switzerland and the attempted-suicide rate remained stable in times of economic crisis in Helsinki, Finland.”

“Rising unemployment rates have been associated with increases in suicide rates in the United States, Japan, Italy, and many European countries, and with increases in male suicide rates in Australia and Spain. However, the association between suicide and unemployment was nonexistent in Scotland, significantly negative in the United Kingdom and Germany, unclear in France, and spurious in Ireland.”

Therefore, while the state of the economic and employment sector has been proven to result in a rise in suicides there must also be wider social forces at work that are contributing to an anomic society.

As discussed earlier, the other-directed era brought forth social changes that make social integration harder. Factors like declining marriage rates, divorce, and having less or no children can lead to increased social isolation. While theoretically suggested by David Riesman, these claims have been empirically tested and proven in a sociological study completed at Rutgers university in 2005 by Professor Julie Phillips. In this study, she found that unmarried middle-aged men were 3.5 times more likely than married men to die from suicide while females were 2.8 times more likely to die by suicide (Phillips, 2005).

Focusing on youth suicide, alarming increases have been noted over the most recent decade. Within the age group 10-14 years of age, suicide rates have doubled since 2006. Over

the course of the new millennium, suicide has become the second leading cause of death of youth ages 10-24 years, behind accidental deaths. Youth suicides are so high that more adolescents perish by “suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease” (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2018). These statistics don’t even include attempts. Every day the United States sees an average of over 3,041 suicide attempts by young people- that screams societal dysfunction to me and suicide has been deemed a public health concern of the United States. By these measures if we take our hypothetical anomic thermometer and gauge society, it has to have an incredibly high fever in order to account for this suicide epidemic.

I also find medical explanations of increased suicide rates relatively unconvincing. Simply because genetic predispositions to suicide, like mental illnesses such as depression, although increasingly diagnosed in an other-directed era, have always existed and therefore cannot be the sole causal factor of increased suicide. Overall, I think thus far there is a lack of research that seeks to explain the drastic rise in youth suicide. In fact, what research does show, is that periods of economic crisis don’t translate into the adolescent suicide rate.

From a sociological standpoint, social interaction is crucial for social integration, and it seems that modernity is tailored for interactions with others. There are 7.7 billion people in the world. Of the worldwide population 4.2 billion are Internet users and there are now 3.397 billion active social media users (Brandwatch, 2019). The amount of social media users increased by 320 million people between 2017-2018, and now Internet users have an average of 7.6 social media accounts (Brandwatch, 2019). Among the most popular sites are Facebook with 2.30 billion users, Instagram with 1 billion users, Snapchat with 186 million daily users, Twitter with 1.3 billion accounts, WhatsApp with 900 million users, and YouTube with 1.5 billion users

(Brandwatch, 2019). With a decent Wi-Fi, all the previously stated sites further allow you to connect with virtually anyone, anywhere in the world.

Summarizing findings by Brandwatch Analytics (2019) Facebook adds 500,000 new users every day. 68% of all Americans are on Facebook, and 76% of those users check it daily. 45% of Americans use Twitter, and 500 million tweets are posted each day. 94% of Americans 18-24 years old use YouTube, a site that sees 300 hours of video content being uploaded every minute. 71% of Americans use Instagram, 90% of those users being younger than 35 years old. Over 95 million photos are uploaded each day to the platform, and 4.2 billion likes are exchanged on the app per day. The average Instagram user spends 15 minutes daily on the app. This is slightly less than the time users spend on Snapchat daily, which is 25 minutes per day. 78% of Americans 18-24 years old use Snapchat.

Mary Meeker's Internet trends report in 2018 highlights the increase of technology usage in the past decade.

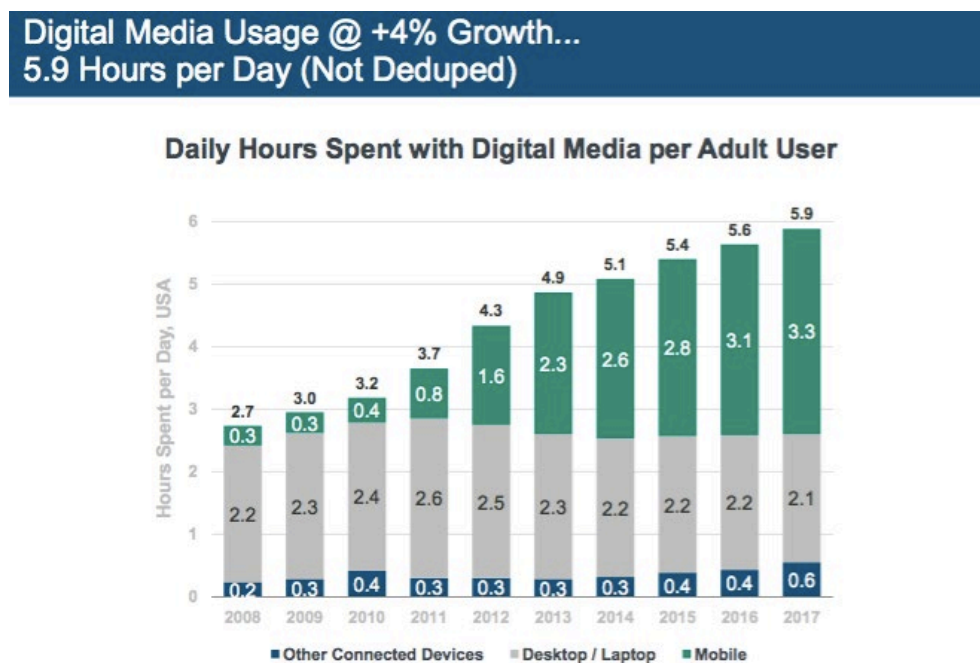


Figure 32. Daily Hours Spent with Digital Media per Adult User. Source: Mary Meeker's Internet Trends Report.



Figure thirty-two denotes how much time the average Internet user spends staring at a screen. It can be seen that the average user spent 5.9 hours with digital media like smartphones, desktops and laptops, game consoles, and other connected devices. The explosion of social media contributed to the steep increase of mobile usage over the new millennium, at about a 4% increase each year. Not only are mobile usages increasing, so are television subscription services such as Netflix. Seeing a 25% year-over-year increase, Netflix reached 118 million users in 2017. Mobile video increased as well worldwide, with a 300% increase from less than 10 minutes spent consuming videos on a mobile device in 2012 to more than 30 minutes daily consumption time. Solely analyzing the United States, the average adult spends about one hour and sixteen minutes each day watching video on digital devices (Meeker, 2017).

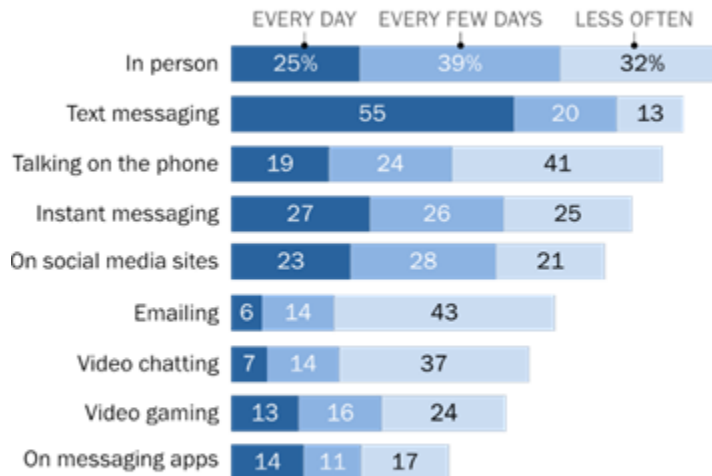
What these statistics and reports highlight is that the way Americans spend their time and how they interact with each other has changed substantially with the rise of technological innovation. Pew research (2015) released data showing the dominate ways that millennial teens interact with their friends. As seen in the figure thirty- three below, only 25% of teens actually spend time with their “close friends” in person, outside of school. It is apparent from this data that face to face interaction has been replaced by communication through a screen.

Technological interaction is the new normal for social experiences, 79% of teens instant message their friends, 72% spend time with their friends on social media, 42% spend time with their friends on messaging apps, 59% of teens spend time with their friends on video chat, and 52% of teens spend time with friends playing video games. However, for each measure, a substantially smaller percent of those teens interacts with their friends in the previously stated way on a daily basis. Perhaps the ease of readily available communication in a technological age makes daily

interaction lose priority. Direr, these readily available means of communication make actual face to face interaction less of a priority.

### More Than Half of Teens Text With Friends Daily

*% of all teens who spend time with friends...*



Source: Pew Research Center Teens Relationships Survey, Sept. 25-Oct. 9, 2014, and Feb. 10-March 16, 2015. (n=1060 teens ages 13 to 17.)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 33. More Than Half of Teens Text with Friends Daily.

While modernity seems tailored for unlimited interactions with others, does technology actually connect and integrate us into society? What rising suicide rates demonstrate is that our social bonds may not be as strong as the number of friends we have on Facebook. The unlimited choice that modernity provides and the sense of instant gratification that has become ingrained in contemporary society leads to the individual constantly comparing, judging, and separating themselves from others.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSION**

Other-directedness is a unique pattern of urban areas in developed nations because they are the first areas able to adopt the other-directed paradigm. This pattern is observed in part because of inner and tradition directed people going to urban areas seeking economic opportunity which weakens the nuclear family, allowing the creation of a new cultural paradigm. For instance, this has spread to South Korea, where laws are being made to disallow people under the age of 18 from being on the Internet between the hours of 12 am and 6 am. Suggesting that young people in South Korea are so screen dependent that there has to be a government mandated limit on how much they can use said screens. Suicide rates suggest that an other-directed society is anomic society, that cannot nurture a healthy psychosocial development, thus, failing Erik Erikson's stages. This is demonstrated in rates of delayed marriage, reduction in crude birth rates, lack of job commitment, depression, and social media dependence.

Social media has the world's biggest Internet user base, with 3.397 billion active social media users. Although more people than ever use and are connected through social media, we are less connected and socially integrated than we have ever been. To expand on this research, more studies should be done into countries that aren't developed, developing, and rural areas. This should be researched because these are areas that don't have a history of other-directedness but might be expressing maladaptation's in culture. Looking in purely other-directed societies, one could examine other measures such as accidents, binge drinking, alienations, social associations, and social distance to see that technology distances people. Further research could

also examine the increasing rate of ADHD diagnoses among children, to illustrate and support David Riesman's assertion that contemporary society cuts people down to size.

Although repercussions of the other-directed cultural paradigm are only beginning to be seen, long term implications can be hypothesized as a decreased population of which do not partake in the American Dream which in extension effects social security pension programs, continual increase in suicide rates and depression, increased conformist attitudes leading to an increasingly medicated population, as well as a socially awkward society that cannot function based on the disagreement of societal symbols. Applying Georg Simmel's sociological conception of the stranger to modernity, it can be said that in the midst of a technologically advanced, other-directed society, unity as it was is now near and far.

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